

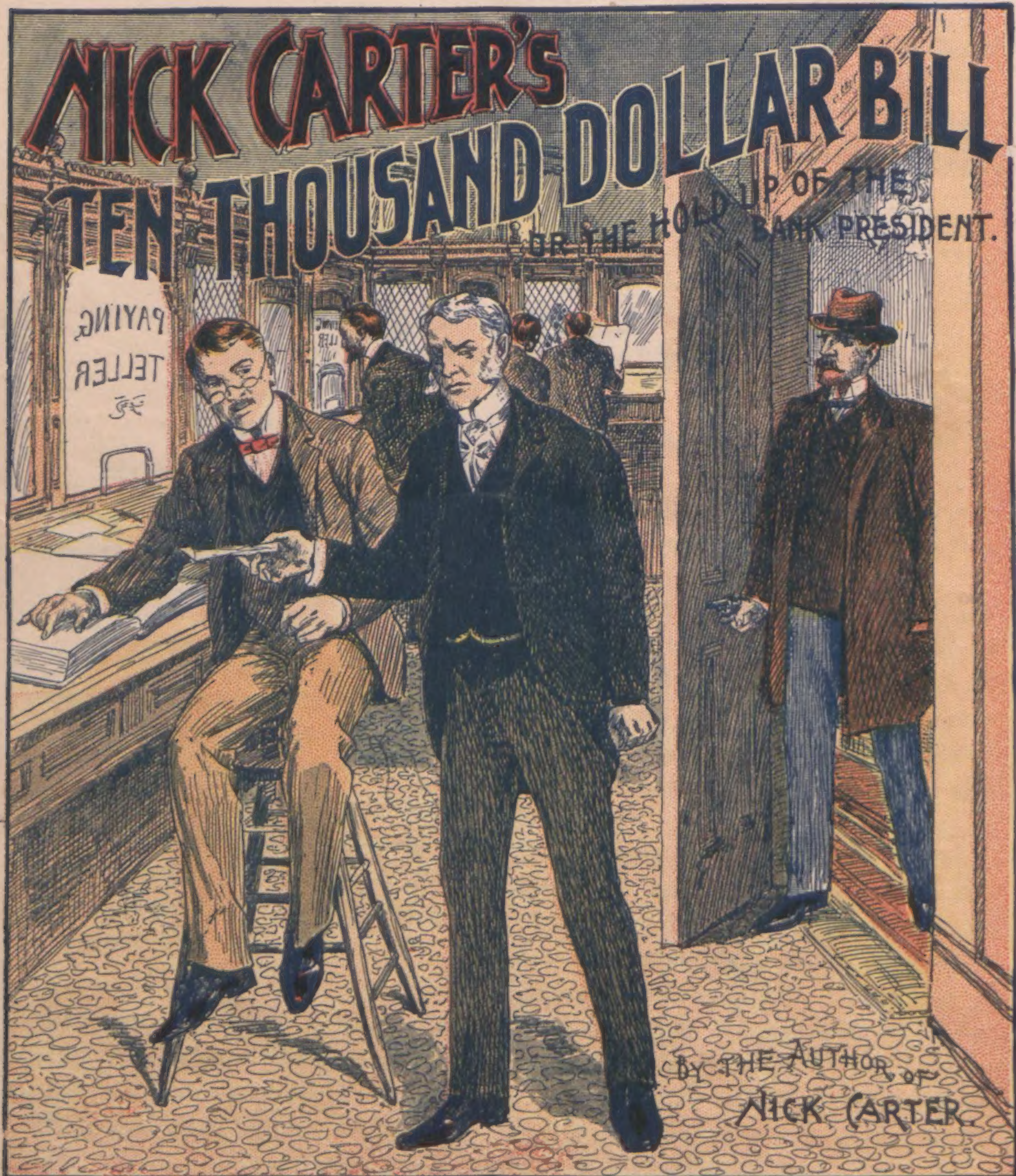
NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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THE ROBBER'S HAND GRASPED THE REVOLVER. THE BANK PRESIDENT HANDED THE CHECK TO THE PAYING-TELLER.

300

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Nick Carter's Ten Thousand Dollar Bill; OR, THE HOLD-UP OF THE BANK PRESIDENT.

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

THE GAMBLER CONSPIRATOR.

Six men were seated around a table in one of the best known and most famous—or infamous—gambling-houses in the city of Denver.

They were engaged in an earnest conversation, and before them upon the table were several piles of greenbacks.

But for the absence of cards or other signs of gambling one might have thought that they were indulging in a game of chance of some kind, or were engaged in dividing the profits of some great coup.

Not so, however.

They were organizing a monster conspiracy by which their fellow-man was to be defrauded of huge sums of money.

They were gamblers, and with one ex-

ception men who were well known in Denver.

Nearest the window, and by common consent occupying the "chair," was Dan Derrington.

Tall, dark, handsome, educated, accomplished, talented, he was a host in himself, and a man who, although a gambler and the proprietor of a gaming resort, held the respect and confidence of many a substantial business man in the city.

His house was as respectable as such a place can be, and was frequented by the "best" men in the town, who felt confident that they could find a "square" game under his roof.

He was cool, daring, and, when he played himself, a plunger.

There was something about Derrington which inspired fear as well as confi-

REMEMBER THE MAINE AND PAGE 32.

dence among his friends. One felt that his soft voice could, if he chose to exert it, ring out deafeningly; that his velvety hands, white and beautiful, might close with a grip of steel if occasion required; that his languid air was the litheness of the panther, and that his eyes could blaze with deadly fire if he were once aroused.

Nobody understood Derrington. Everybody feared him. Nobody disliked him, and there were prominent business men in town who did not hesitate to speak of him as their friend.

Yet there was a "something," indefinable though it were, which suggested the sleeping tiger, the buried powder-keg, the coiled serpent lying in the sun at midday by the roadside.

He was tall, over six feet in height, broad and sinewy, and his handsome face was mounted with a glossy, black mustache through which, when he smiled, his white teeth gleamed suddenly.

Next to him was Brayton Danvers, his partner; as polished, as handsome, as big, and as desperate as Derrington. His eyes were blue instead of black, and his mustache, large, fierce, and beautifully trained, was almost golden.

That these two men were the dominant spirits of that strange meeting was evident. They dominated wherever they went.

The gambling-house which they owned and conducted was the best and most reliable in the city.

Next came Burke Gaul, then Morton Connors, and then Chauncey Herrick.

The trio were partners in another con-

cern of the same kind. Indeed it was in one of the rooms of their establishment that the meeting was held, and the time, to be exact, was the night of March 27, 1889.

Gaul was a square-featured, sharp-eyed, keen-looking man, not tall, but broad and muscular. "Gambler" was written all over his almost expressionless face, wherein one could see a trace of the devil that slept within him.

Connors and Herrick were nondescript.

They were gamblers—one could discover that at a glance. There was none of the refinement and polish about them which marked the appearance of Derrington and Danvers, or the rugged yet shrewd personality of Gaul.

The sixth and last was named Sam Seliney, and upon him the eyes of every person present were turned.

He was slight of build, youthful in appearance, restless, and nervous in his motions, but withal there was a pronounced air of determination about him.

There were five piles of greenbacks upon the table—one before each man, with the exception of Seliney.

"Well," said Danvers, after a moment of silence, during which they were all watching Seliney, "where's your ante, Sam?"

"I'm afraid I'll have to stay out," was the reply.

"Stay out?"

"Yes."

"Impossible!"

"It's easier than coming in."

"Why?"

"Because I haven't got the wad."

DIAMOND DICK, JR. STANDS BY HIS FRIENDS.

"Get it then."

"Look here, Danvers, you've each put up twenty-five thousand dollars, and you expect the same from me."

"We do."

"I've got four; that's my pile. If one of you will lend me twenty-one thousand, or if you'll make up the stake between you, I'll——"

"Can't be done, Sam."

"Why?"

"You know as well as I. If you came to me and wanted money for any other purpose I'd stake you in a minute; so would Dan, or Burke, or Mort, or Chan; you know that."

"Yes."

"This is business. We want a hundred and fifty thousand for our capital, and we each agreed to put in twenty-five. It's all up but yours. Shove in your chips, Sam."

"I tell you I haven't got the ore. I got left—went broke; see?"

Dead silence.

"Look here, fellows, I'll tell you what I'll do," suddenly exclaimed Seliney.

"What?" asked Danvers.

"I'll withdraw."

Every man there made a negative sign, and Seliney uttered an oath.

"What can I do?" he exclaimed, impatiently. "I haven't the boodle, and you won't lend it to me; I offer to withdraw, and you shake your heads."

"It's too late for that, Seliney," said Derrington, softly.

"Why?"

"There's only one way in which you can get out of this thing."

"What is that?"

"The grave."

The other four nodded.

"And," continued Derrington, showing his white teeth, "you've got to pay up or get out."

"Ah!"

"Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"It's your money or your life."

"I see."

"The thing has gone too far to let any outsider share our secrets, and the moment you withdrew you would become an outsider. See?"

"Yes."

"This money is an earnest of good faith. We don't invest it, as you know. It is placed in my hands as a chain to bind us together; a cash deposit; a bond for good behavior. You say you haven't the money?"

"No."

"Can you get it?"

"No."

"Will you end your own life in some way, then, and save us the trouble and annoyance?"

"Do you mean that?"

"Certainly."

"I'm twenty-one thousand short."

"So it seems."

"How long will you give me to make my ante good?"

"How long do you want?"

"Forty-eight hours."

"I am willing."

"And I!" chorused the others.

"I'll meet you here forty-eight hours

from now," exclaimed Seliney, "and I'll have the money, or——"

"Or what?"

"Or I'll be dead."

"Ah!"

"I mean it."

"Good, Sam!" cried Danvers. "I believe you do."

"I will pay the amount over on the hour, or I will have ceased to live. If I am not here you may know that I am dead."

Derrington smiled approval.

"Where will you get it?" he asked.

"Does that make any difference?" demanded Seliney.

"No."

"Suppose I steal it?"

Derrington shrugged his shoulders.

"You would probably be caught and taken to prison," he drawled.

"I will never be caught. I know where I can demand the money. If I don't get it I cease to live, that's all."

"Very good."

"I only ask one favor."

"What is it?"

"If I do get it, stand by me."

"Sure. Only——"

"Only what?"

"We won't risk prison walls and such things. Get your money as you please; we don't care how. Hold up a train, rob a bank, find a gold mine, but don't do anything which will tend to mix us up in the thing."

"I won't."

"Forty-eight hours from now, then?"

"Yes."

"Take back your money, gentlemen.

We will make our contributions when we are all prepared, not before."

"Agreed."

"It is now eleven-fifty, P.M. In just forty-eight hours we will meet here again. The meeting is adjourned."

It was not until long afterward that Nick Carter knew the particulars of that strange meeting, but he learned it ultimately, and as showing the motive for the great "hold-up," the author uses it to open the story.

There was not a man present, however, who dreamed of the desperate resolve which Seliney had taken, nor with what daring and success he would carry his plans to fulfillment.

CHAPTER II.

A DARING HOLD-UP.

On the day following the events last recorded, a young, well-dressed man called at the office of David H. Moffat in the Railroad Building.

He was told that the gentleman was not in, and leaving word that he would call again on the following day he left his card, and went away.

The card was inscribed with the name "C. J. Wells," and was duly handed to the president of the First National Bank when he came in.

On the following morning, that is, March 29, 1889, the man called again, and found Mr. Moffat ready to receive him.

"What can I do for you, sir?" asked the genial gentleman.

The man who called himself Wells stepped forward, and in a low tone said:

DIAMOND DICK, JR. IS A REAL HERO.

"My business is private, sir, and I would like to see you alone for a moment only."

"Very good," was the reply. "Step right in here."

President Moffat led the way to his private office, and motioned his caller to a chair.

"Now I am at your service," he said.

"The fact is, Mr. Moffat," began the stranger, "my errand is a very unusual one."

"Indeed."

"Yes. By accident I have learned of a gigantic scheme by which your bank is to be defrauded of a large sum of money."

"Ah!"

"I have thought the matter all over, and I wish to put you in full possession of the facts."

"That is very kind of you, Mr. Wells."

"It is my duty, sir."

"Will you tell me the story at once, please!"

"Pardon me, but I am not fully prepared at the present moment, and," looking at his watch, "I have not time."

"But——"

"Pardon me again, sir. I know many of the details of this affair, but not the most important ones. To learn them, in order to be prepared to fully inform you, I must be in a certain place in twenty minutes. Can I not see you at the bank later in the day?"

"Why, yes, of course."

"That will do capitally. I will be at your office at the bank promptly at one o'clock."

"Very good."

"If you will give me a private interview then I will be fully prepared to reveal one of the boldest and shrewdest schemes of robbery ever planned. I must hasten now. I will be at the bank promptly at one."

"I will expect you."

Mr. Wells departed, and Mr. Moffat, engrossed in other matters, almost forgot the incident until noon.

At one o'clock, however, he was at his desk at the bank, and two minutes afterward the man Wells entered.

"Ah!" said the president, "are you ready with your story now?"

"Yes; fully."

"Good! Take a chair!"

"Thank you. Have you a blank check handy, Mr. Moffat?"

"A blank check?"

"Yes."

"What do you want of that?"

"I wish to show you exactly how this thing is to be done."

"Ah! Very good. Here is one."

As Mr. Moffat exhibited the check the stranger's eyes glistened suddenly.

"We will now settle this matter between you and me," he exclaimed.

Rising to his feet he thrust one hand in his pocket as if in search of paper or something of the kind.

Instead however, he drew forth a revolver of the Colt pattern, and coolly aimed it at the bank president's head.

"Oblige me by filling out that check for precisely twenty-one thousand dollars," he said, coldly.

"Why! What do you mean!" exclaimed the astonished official.

"Exactly what I say. If you make a move or speak a word louder than an ordinary tone I will kill you on the spot. I am in desperate circumstances, and I want twenty-one thousand dollars. You must give it to me."

"But——"

"Don't talk; act, if you value your life. Look here!"

As he spoke he drew a bottle tightly corked from another pocket, and held it before Mr. Moffat's eyes.

"Do you see this?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"This bottle contains nitro-glycerine."

"Good heavens, man——"

"Wait. I want twenty-one thousand dollars. I must have it. If I do not get it I shall kill myself anyhow. I care nothing for my life without it. Yesterday I had determined upon suicide. To-day I take this chance of saving my life. If you wink, make a single sign, touch a button, or attempt to do anything to give the alarm, I will shoot you dead where you sit. Then I will use this bottle, and not only blow up the building, but everybody in it. On you, sir, depend the lives of a dozen, ay, a score or more people. Will you sacrifice your own and theirs for twenty-one thousand dollars?"

Mr. Moffat was speechless.

"Fill out the check," continued the stranger, sternly. "I have calculated every point. It is a question of your money or your life. Write!"

Mr. Moffat wrote.

He saw there was no help for it.

The man before him was not a crank. He was sure of that.

He read determination and settled purpose in the stranger's coolness and daring.

He saw that it was his money or his life, and very sensibly he decided to give the money.

"I could demand fifty thousand, and get it as easily as the twenty-one," continued Wells. "I don't do it. I demand only what I want, only what I must have. Come! There are many lives at stake. Write."

The bank president filled out the check, and signed it.

"There," he said, putting it out toward the robber.

But Wells did not touch it.

"Get it cashed for me," he said, laconically.

"Ah!"

"Take it into the bank, hand it to the paying-teller, and request him to bring the money to you here."

Mr. Moffat rose hastily.

He thought he saw a chance to give the alarm, but the robber was prepared for that also.

"Listen!" he said, sternly. "I still have the revolver and the explosive ready, and at the least sign of betrayal I will use both. If I am caught, you will be dead. I shall walk into the bank with you, part of the way. I shall keep you covered. I am a dead shot. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"If you give the slightest sign or say a word more than is necessary to get that

RUFFIANS HATE DIAMOND DICK, JR.

check cashed, I will kill you instantly, and then blow up the bank. Now go."

Mr. Moffat went.

Wells followed him through the door of communication between the private office and the bank, and stood just beyond the threshold with one hand under his coat.

That hand grasped the revolver, and the bank president knew that his heart was covered, and that the robber would keep his word.

He handed the check to the paying-teller, and said:

"Cash that, and bring the money to my office."

Then he turned, and still followed by the bold robber's eyes, passed again into his private office, and closed the door.

The two men seated themselves, and in silence awaited the arrival of the money.

"Remember my warning, when the cash is brought in," remarked Wells, presently.

"I will remember."

Minutes dragged by, and the money did not come.

"What makes that fellow so slow?" demanded the robber impatiently.

"He will come presently," returned the banker.

Then the door opened, and the paying-teller appeared.

"How do you want that sum, Mr. Moffat?" he asked.

"Mr. Wells will tell you," was the cool reply.

"A thousand in gold, the rest in bills," said Wells, quickly.

The paying-teller disappeared, but he

soon came back, bringing the money with him.

He laid it upon the desk, and, turning, left the office.

The eyes of the robber gleamed as he stood the bottle of explosive upon a chair, and still keeping his revolver in readiness, placed the money in his pockets with his disengaged hand.

"Now, sir," he said, "I am going."

"I can't say that I have enjoyed your call," was the grim reply.

"Necessity knows no law, Mr. Moffat. I meant every word I said to you, and every threat I made. I mean what I am about to say to you now, too."

"I don't doubt it. What is it?"

"I will not be taken. If you make any effort to have me captured while I am leaving the bank, I will blow up the building. Do you understand that?"

"It is plain enough."

"Remember! I will not be taken. Death is far preferable. I mean it. Good-day, sir."

He turned and coolly left the office, and walked rapidly out of the bank.

In a moment he was gone.

Then, as soon as he dared, the bank president leaped to his feet and gave the alarm.

A moment later the utmost confusion reigned in the First National Bank of Denver.

CHAPTER III.

TWO FAMILIAR FACES.

It is useless here to describe the scenes which followed the daring robbery of President Moffat.

YOU SHOULD GET A WAR BADGE AT ONCE.

The confusion for the next few hours after the departure of the man who had called himself J. C. Wells, beggars description.

Bank clerks and depositors rushed from the building in the effort to catch a glimpse of the daring fellow; but nobody saw him. He had disappeared as utterly as though he had ceased to exist.

It was true that there was an arrest, but it was a mistaken one, and the man was liberated as soon as Mr. Moffat saw him.

The police of Denver were all excitement.

A large reward was offered for the arrest and conviction of the robber; but days and weeks went by, and nothing came of it—until Nick Carter appeared upon the scene.

That occurred one morning soon after the bank opened for the transaction of business.

A simple-looking, unassuming man suddenly appeared at the cashier's window.

"I'd like to see Mr. Moffat," he said.

"What for?" asked the cashier, shortly.

"For instance, maybe; for business, more likely," was the cool reply.

"What is your business, sir?"

"It's mine—and his, thank goodness—and none of yours."

"State your business, or you cannot see him."

"Can't I?"

"No."

"Has your veracity ever been in question, Mr. Cashier?"

"Sir! What do you mean?"

"Do you often tell such barefaced, unadulterated, blooming, downright—er—romances as that one?"

The cashier was good-natured, and the expression on the detective's face was so utterly devoid of any wish to offend, that the man behind the grating laughed as he said:

"Will you tell me your name?"

"Not now, thank you."

"Your business, then?"

"It's private."

"No one is admitted to Mr. Moffat's office without first stating the business in hand."

"Humph! Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Mister, have you got a double-barreled shot-gun, a six-shooter, and a couple of bowies? If you have, will you take 'em in your hands and conduct me into the presence of the Czar of the First National Bank of Denver? He doesn't exercise much, I'm told, and therefore he's tender and plump. I'm hungry, and I might eat him."

"Come, come! State your business."

"Well, just step into his office quietly, so as not to startle him, you know, and say that I'm harmless. Then appoint a committee to search me for dynamite, guns, and such things. When you're thoroughly satisfied, tell Mr. Moffat that the fellow he sent for from New York is here."

The expression of the cashier's face changed.

He leaned forward, and whispered:

"Are you Nick Carter?"

Nick nodded.

RALLY ROUND THE FLAG—WEAR A FLAG PIN.

"Walk right in, then."

"Thanks."

They both laughed, and in a moment more the detective and the bank president were closeted together.

Nor were they long in getting down to business.

In detail, Mr. Moffat rehearsed everything that had happened when he had been robbed by the man who called himself C. J. Wells, and the great detective listened in silence.

When the story was finished, Nick said, slowly:

"There seems to be no clue whatever to go on."

"None at all," returned Mr. Moffat.

"There are, however, several suggestive features in the case."

"Yes; and——"

"Well?"

"I took good care to study his face. My description of Wells is, I think, exact."

"It amounts to nothing, Mr. Moffat."

"Indeed! Why?"

"Because a man who would dare such a thing as that robbery would also calculate every point connected with it."

"Still——"

"Excuse me. He would take good care to alter his appearance enough so that your description would be very wide of the mark."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Then there is absolutely no clue."

"Wait; we will see about that."

"But there is not."

"You say he asked for just twenty-one thousand dollars."

"Yes."

"Why didn't he demand twenty-five thousand or twenty thousand dollars even? Why just twenty-one thousand dollars?"

"Who can say?"

"I think I can; but wait. Bankers are fairly good judges of character. Go back to the first moment that you saw him in the Railroad Building."

"Well—"

"What was your impression of him then?"

"I remember it distinctly."

"Good! Let me hear it."

"I thought him a fellow who, perhaps, had friends in Crookdom, but who had not sunk low enough to steal as yet."

"Go on, please."

"I figured that he had overheard some scheme for defrauding the bank, and that he considered it his duty to warn me."

"What more? Analyze your opinion of that day."

"I believed that he would demand a reward for what he proposed to do——"

"In money?"

"No."

"In what then?"

"In immunity for his friends."

"Exactly."

"Eh?"

"In other words, he did not impress you as being a crook himself?"

"No."

"Very good. Now, we come back to the peculiarity of his demand—the fact that he wanted just twenty-one thousand dollars."

"Yes."

"Did he say something about suicide?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"He said, in effect, that his life was forfeited unless he procured that amount of money."

"Which means——"

"You tell; I can't."

"It means that he had agreed to pay somebody that amount that day, and that he had staked his life upon it."

"H'm! Perhaps so."

"Let us follow that theory out for a moment, and see what we get."

"Very well."

"There are a great many gamblers in Denver, are there not?"

"Yes."

"They include all classes, from the gentleman who plays for excitement, the sport who plays for gain, to the crook who plays because he has stolen money in his possession, and wants to spend it."

"Yes."

"If the gambling-houses had been visited that day, Mr. Moffat, and if it had been learned that somebody had lost just twenty-one thousand dollars on the previous night, it might have been a clue."

"By Jove! That's so."

"I don't say it would have been."

"No."

"But let us suppose, for example, that Wells was a gambler."

"Yes."

"He had lost the sum he demanded, or more, at play."

"Yes."

"He had said, 'I will pay that money at such a time, or I will be dead.'"

"Yes."

"In that case, he told the truth when he said that he cared nothing for his life, for such men consider their obligations of greater importance than anything else, particularly when they have given nothing but their bare word."

"Rather remarkable, isn't it?"

"Not at all. A gambler's credit is his word. If he breaks it, his friends leave him. He may dishonor a note, cheat at cards, pick a drunken man's pocket, and they wink at it. Let him promise to pay and fail, and they leave him as rats leave a sinking ship. It is not a question of honor with them, but a means of livelihood."

"Ah!"

"If this man, Wells, promised to pay a certain amount at a certain time or forfeit his life; he meant it, and if you had failed him in any way that day, he would have carried out his threat. I believe that to be a good theory."

"It sounds reasonable."

"As we have no other, we will work on that a little."

"Very good."

"Can any of the money that was paid to him be identified?"

"Just one bill."

"Ah! What was it?"

"A ten-thousand-dollar-bill."

"Has any effort been made to trace it?"

"Certainly."

"With any success?"

"No."

DIAMOND DICK, JR. DEFENDS THE HELPLESS.

"Give me a description of the bill before I leave. It may come handy."

"I will do so."

"Who knows that you sent for me?"

"My cashier."

"Anybody else?"

"No."

"Let no one but your cashier learn of the fact. Caution him not to mention my name in any way, and do not, on any account, let it be thought that you are making any effort beyond that already attempted to catch the robber."

"I will do as you say."

"Good! That is all, I believe."

"Rather a slim case, isn't it, Carter?"

"Yes; but I have had tougher ones in my time."

"When will I see you again?"

"Probably when you least expect it. I won't come here again, I think, and you may hear or see nothing of me for weeks. Whether you do or not, remember that I am still at work. I may have to spend some money in this case, Mr. Moffat."

"Spend whatever you feel obliged to. Your recommendation to me is all sufficient. I have only one direction to give you—catch that robber."

"I'll try."

Nick left the bank, and strolled slowly along the street toward the Windsor Hotel.

"I reckon I'll jump the town," he said to the clerk, as he paid for his dinner three hours later. "Train for Pueblo at two, ain't there?"

"Yes."

"Reckon I'll take it. Fine town this, but I never saw a place yet that amounted

to much, if you ain't got no friend in it; hey?"

"That's so."

"On t'other hand, any place is nice, if Tom, Dick, and Harry live there; hey?"

"Sure."

"Well, so long."

He walked to the depot, satchel in hand, but slackened his pace as he reached the platform, for he saw two men whom he recognized a few paces in advance of him.

They were Dan Derrington and Brayton Danvers.

CHAPTER IV.

A WOULD-BE ASSASSIN.

When Nick saw and recognized Derrington and Danvers in front of him, he slackened his pace.

The encounter was suggestive, for he had determined to leave Denver, and to return again as a gambler from the East, who had come out to be fleeced, or to pluck a fortune from the Western men.

He knew both men by sight, and with Derrington he had some acquaintance as the result of a former visit.

However, he knew that neither of the men would recognize him in the disguise he then wore.

"There are the very men whom I want most to cultivate," was the thought that went through Nick's mind as he spied them. "I wonder what they are talking so earnestly about?"

He quickened his step until he was close behind them, but although neither of the men turned, they knew he was

NO ONE KNOWS THE WEST BETTER THAN DIAMOND DICK, JR.

there, for they ceased speaking, and the detective heard nothing.

But the very fact that they did not want a third person to hear what they were saying was in itself interesting.

True, they might have been discussing any one of hundreds of different things connected with their business, which they preferred to keep to themselves. It was the coincidence of seeing them at the very moment when his mind was upon them that interested Nick more than anything else.

The reader must not suppose that Nick was gifted with second sight.

He could not, by any possibility, know that Derrington and Danvers were in any way connected with the man whom he knew as C. J. Wells.

The meeting in Larimer street of four years ago was as yet a locked secret to him.

It was therefore, only on general principles that he became interested in the two men in front of him.

They were gamblers—the best known gamblers in Denver. He had decided to work a little upon the theory that Wells was a gambler.

If the detective was right, the man Wells would be known to Derrington and Danvers—not, perhaps, by the name of Wells—but they would know something of the incidents of the time, and an anecdote from the lips of one of them might furnish Nick with the clue he wanted.

He told Moffat not to let it be known that Nick Carter was in Denver, and yet

he instantly resolved to reveal that fact himself.

So much time had elapsed since the commission of the crime that he was working upon, that unless it were known that he had really been in consultation with Mr. Moffat, he would not be connected with the case of the great bank "hold-up."

Turning abruptly aside, he passed through the depot, and walked hastily toward an empty passenger-car, which stood unused upon the side track of the D. & R. G. Railroad.

He passed around the car, mounted the platform from the far side, and entered.

He was alone.

In a moment he tore away the disguise he wore, and in five more he was arrayed in the one in which he knew that Derrington would recognize him.

From the satchel he took a few things that he wished to preserve, and stowed them away in his pockets; then, abandoning it, he leaped from the car, darted around the corner of the depot, and the next moment, with his hands thrust into his trousers pockets and idly whistling a familiar tune he strolled down the depot platform and came face to face with the two gamblers.

"Hello, Derrington!" he exclaimed. "How are you Danvers?" and he paused in front of them.

They had been talking earnestly together, pacing up and down the while, and Nick fancied that he saw them both start as he spoke to them.

Derrington's keen eyes were upon him, however, in an instant, and as though he

had parted from the detective not five minutes before, he said:

"How're you, Carter? Fine day, isn't it?"

"Great! What's new? Anything?"

"No. Times are dull; dish water isn't in it."

"Really? Has Morford gone broke?"

"Who?"

"Morford."

"Don't know him."

"What! Don't know Mark Morford?"

"Haven't the honor."

"That's odd."

"Why?"

"Oh, nothing! The last time I saw him he said he was coming out here to do you up, that's all. I supposed he was here."

"Who is he?"

"An Englishman; a plunger from way back."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. They're all afraid of him in New York. Daly won't play against him any more, and——"

"He must be a terror."

"Bah! He's lucky, that's all."

"Coming here, eh?"

"So he said. Probably he's changed his mind. The last time I saw him play, he won twenty-one thousand on one turn."

"Twenty-one thousand!" exclaimed Danvers.

He and Derrington exchanged a quick glance, and then both men laughed.

"I could stand that several times running," said Derrington, coolly. "I say, Carter, who are you after now?"

"Nobody."

"Eh? Nobody!"

"Just finished; on my way home; waited to see Denver, and have a try with you myself."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Didn't know you ever played."

"Never during business hours."

"Oh!"

Everybody laughed, and Nick was turning when Danvers stopped him.

"Do you mean what you said?" he asked.

"Sure."

"Then dine with us to-night won't you?"

"Where?"

"At the rooms, 8:30."

"Good! I'll be there."

Nick started away. He had taken but a few steps, however, when his glance fell upon a man who was stealthily approaching the spot where the two gamblers had resumed their interrupted conversation.

To the ordinary observer, there was nothing about the man to attract attention, but to Nick Carter there was much.

His eyes gleamed strangely, and they were fixed intently upon the two men whom Nick had just left.

His right hand was thrust into the breast of his coat as though it grasped the hilt of a weapon.

He walked slowly, and the detective noticed that with every step he placed the ball of his foot upon the platform before the heel was permitted to touch, thus accomplishing the same effect as tip-

toeing, but without the appearance of it.

"That fellow means mischief of some kind," muttered Nick, "and either Dan or Bray is the object of it."

He passed along until he got behind the man who had attracted his attention.

Then, adopting the same tactics, although more expertly, he glided forward until he was within four feet of the man and directly behind him.

He was now sure that the fellow contemplated mischief. Two or three times he heard him mutter a curse or two, and each time a spasmodic motion of the right arm almost brought the concealed hand into view.

"He's got a bowie there, sure," was Nick's thought, "and, if I were not here, one of those fellows would get it. I wonder which one?"

Nearer and nearer they approached.

"By Jove! It's Derrington!" thought Nick. "Well, I'll save him, anyhow. Maybe I'll make something in the way of information."

The would-be assassin was so intent upon his prospective victim that he neither heard nor saw the detective who was behind him.

It is doubtful if it occurred to him to suspect that he was watched.

Murder was in his heart. His victim was near at hand and he gave no thought to consequences.

Step by step they approached.

Derrington and Danvers, absorbed in their conversation, never once looked behind them.

Suddenly, with a leap like a panther, the unknown man sprang forward.

At the same instant he drew a bowie from its place of concealment in his coat, and raised it in the air.

"I've got you at last, Dan Derrington," he cried.

The knife descended.

It would, in an instant more, have been buried between Derrington's shoulders.

But the wrist that held it was seized in an iron grasp.

It was bent backward until it cracked with a loud noise.

The murderous knife fell clattering to the depot platform, and the man who had attempted to use it uttered a wild cry of pain and rage, and turned upon his unknown foe.

But Nick was prepared for him.

He seized the fellow in his arms, and with a quick swing, threw him bodily over his head, so that he landed in a heap upon the platform, breathless, senseless, still.

Derrington wheeled just in time to see the last act of what came very near being the tragedy of his own life.

"You, Carter!" he cried, placing his right hand where he carried a revolver.

"No, that fellow!" replied Nick, coolly.

"What happened?"

"He tried to knife you, that's all. I saw him, and stepped in."

"I'll thank you for it some time, Carter," said the gambler.

Then he stepped toward the would-be murderer.

"Is he dead, Carter?" he asked.

"No; he only fainted. I broke his wrist."

"Ah!"

"It had to be done. Do you know him?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"A poor devil who went broke at my place last night. He's crazy, I reckon."

"Acted like it. Tell me the story."

"I will to-night. Wait till I fix this with the cop. I don't want the fellow prosecuted."

"That's good of you."

"Bah! I'll be back in a minute. Stroll along with Bray. I'll overtake you."

"Good!"

"And I'll tell you the story, too."

"Yes, and others," thought Nick, as he locked arms with Danvers, and turned away.

CHAPTER V.

DERRINGTON'S SHREWD PLAY.

Nick felt that he had indeed won the confidence of the gambler, Dan Derrington, by the fortunate occurrence on the platform of the Union Depot, and as he walked away from the spot with Danvers he knew, if there was anything in his theory, that he was already upon the track of the man who had so boldly robbed President Moffat in his own bank.

But he speedily saw that the gamblers were not without their own suspicions regarding his presence there, and that they meant to find out his business if possible.

He smile at the idea of anybody trying to pump him, and he resolved to let them use their utmost endeavors in that direction.

"Been here long?" asked Danvers, after a moment.

"No; just came."

"Finished up your case, you say."

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"Forgery!"

"Ah! One of the Denver banks?"

"No, a New York bank."

"Indeed. Did you catch the forger here?"

"Not quite," laughed the detective. "I traced him here, but got a wire this morning that my assistant had already nabbed the man."

"Ah!"

A moment of silence followed, during which they were joined by Derrington.

He commenced the same game that Danvers had attempted, but in a very different way.

Derrington was much more foxy than his partner, and followed different rules for reaching a given result.

"Well," he said, "I've fixed things."

"Yes?" replied Nick; "how?"

"I told the cops who you were, and all that."

"Indeed! By night everybody will know that Nick Carter is in the city."

"Sure! you haven't any objections, have you? I understood——"

"Oh, not the least."

"I understood that you had finished the business that brought you here."

"Quite right."

"Something interesting, was it?"

"Quite so."

Nick saw an intelligent glance pass between Danvers and Derrington, and the latter at once changed the subject.

"By the way," he said, "what do you know about this fellow Morford?"

"I told you, Dan."

"All you know?"

"Yes."

"Good! I hope he'll come. We'll teach him how to play when he does, and introduce him to the Denver tiger."

Nick laughed.

Presently Derrington continued:

"Your remark about him brings to mind a strange thing that happened here some time ago."

"Yes; what?"

"The amount he won at one turn of the cards brought it to my mind."

"Ah?"

"The twenty-one thousand dollars, you know."

"Sorry I didn't know, but I don't quite catch on."

"Don't you remember the Moffat robbery?"

"The Moffat robbery?"

"Yes."

"Oh! Yes, I remember it now. A fellow went to the First National Bank and held the president up for twenty-one thousand dollars, didn't he?"

"That's it."

"Did they ever catch him?"

"No."

"Nor get any trace of him?"

"No."

"I would have enjoyed that case, Dan."

"Why?"

"Well, I like blind cases."

"Why don't you apply for it now?"

"Now? The thing is getting gray, isn't it?"

"What of that? It's all the more blind."

"True."

"Why don't you go and see Moffat and get the case?"

"Hadn't thought of it."

"You say you're not busy now?"

"No."

"There's a good reward offered."

"Is there? The trail is too old, Dan. I like fresh ones."

"I'd like to see you on that case."

"Why?"

"Oh, because I think you'd get left for once."

"Again, why?"

"Some of the smartest detectives in the world have worked on it, and given it up."

"So?"

"Yes."

"Humph!"

"Talk of angels," suddenly cried Danvers, "there comes Moffat down the street now."

Derrington came to a sudden halt.

"I'll make a bet with you, Carter," he said.

"What kind of a bet?"

"I'll introduce you to Moffat. If he will put the case in your hands, and you will take it, I'll bet you any amount you'll stake that you can't catch Wells."

"Wells! Was that the fellow's name?"

"Yes."

"Well, give me the introduction."

"Will you bet?"

"I'll tell you later."

"Cautious, eh?"

"Certainly."

"If I wait, I must make conditions."

"What are they?"

"If you conclude to bet, you must agree never to see Moffat after this interview, unless I am with you, or Danvers, or both of us."

"Why?"

"Well, you must get all your clues at once, at this conversation; see?"

"That doesn't give me a show, Dan."

"I'll make the bet two to one, for any amount you please."

"Done!"

"You'll do it?"

"Yes."

"Good! I'll stop Moffat, and we'll have the talk."

"How much time will you give me?"

"A month."

"I'll win your money, Dan."

"Bet you a thousand you don't!" exclaimed Danvers.

Nick turned and faced him; then, coolly sticking out his right hand, he said:

"I'll take that, too."

In the meantime Mr. Moffat had approached quite near, and by a gesture Derrington stopped him.

"How are you, Moffat?" he said. "I want to introduce a friend to you."

"Happy to meet him."

HURRAH FOR DIAMOND DICK, JR.!

"Mr. Moffat, shake hands with Mr. Nick Carter, the greatest detective on earth."

Nick's only fear regarding the encounter was how Mr. Moffat would take the abrupt announcement of his identity.

He knew that the bank president would not recognize him in the disguise he then wore, and he also knew that the lynx-eyed gamblers would watch the bank president's features narrowly for a sign which would betray a knowledge of Carter's presence in Denver.

But Mr. Moffat was as "fly" as any of them.

He knew that the ways of detectives were inscrutable ever, and he had prepared himself to be surprised at nothing that Nick Carter did.

His face did not change a shade when Nick's name was pronounced.

He shook hands cordially, said some commonplace and polite thing about being honored, etc., and coolly asked Nick what brought him to Denver.

"Never mind that," interrupted Danvers, who seemed delighted at something. "Carter and Dan have made a bet, and the conditions depend upon you."

"Upon me?"

"Yes."

"How so?"

"Carter bets that he can capture Wells, who held you up once, inside of a month. Dan bets he can't, see?"

"Yes. I should be glad to have Mr. Carter try it. The reward is still waiting for somebody."

"There are conditions in the bet," said Derrington.

"Yes?"

"He is to get all his information regarding the affair from you at this conversation, and he is not to consult with

you again unless Danvers or I, or both of us, are present."

"Why is that?"

"Oh, for no reason except that I make the condition."

"Rather an interesting bet," murmured the bank president. "Do you think you can win it?"

"I can try."

"You are to be stakeholder, Mr. Moffat, if you will."

"Certainly."

"We will send the money to you to-night, then."

"Very good."

"Now, Carter," continued the gambler, "fire your questions at him."

"I shall only ask three or four."

"Bully for you!"

"Mr. Moffat," said Nick, coolly, "did you read the published accounts of the robbery, in the Denver papers, at the time it occurred?"

"Yes."

"Were those accounts correct?"

"Yes."

"Is there any point that you can give me not in addition to what I can find there, which will be of assistance?"

"None."

"Thanks. That will do. I will not see you again until I have the robber in my power. Mr. Derrington and Mr. Danvers will be with me, I think, to see the last act in the play."

"Very good."

"You may let anybody and everybody know that I am on the case, if you choose. I propose to win, hands down, or lose."

"Good! I like your pluck, Mr. Carter, and I think you will win. I hope you will. Good-day."

The bank president passed on his way, and Nick and the two gamblers continued theirs.

"You're a cute one, Carter," said Der-
rington, with a laugh.

"Why?"

"Nobody but you would have thought
of the newspapers. You get the whole
story there."

"I thought I would. Reporters are
sometimes good detectives."

"Ah!"

"I shall read the articles, and then I
will look up the men who wrote them.
Catch on?"

"Yes."

"I shall win your money, Dan, and
yours, Bray."

"Maybe."

"You will see."

"We will see."

"Now tell me the story about the fel-
low in the depot."

"Bah! Why? I had forgotten it."

"I hadn't. Let's hear it."

"Wait. Here is our stopping-place.
Come inside, and I'll tell you."

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW SCHEME IN GREEN-GOODS.

"I can tell the story in a few words,"
said the gambler, when all three were
seated in a comfortable room that ad-
joined the faro-bank of the two sports.

"The fewer the better, so that I get it
all," said Nick, sententiously.

"Why are you so anxious to hear it?"

Nick smiled.

"Only because it interests me," he
said. "I can give no good reason."

"Then——"

"A fellow tried to murder you. I
spoiled his hand for him. Naturally I
feel an interest in the thing."

"Oh, well. He came here from Kansas
City, and swore to break me. He won at
first, and went away. Last night he re-
turned and played again. When he got

up he was thirty thousand dollars poorer,
and I was twenty thousand dollars ahead
of the whole deal. He lost his grip and
tried to shoot, but my fellows put him
out. I suppose he's been on a still hunt
for me to-day. Off his nut, I guess."

"Ah! What's his name?"

"Rogers. Richard Rogers, he said."

"It'll go hard with him, won't it?"

"No."

"Why?"

"I shan't appear against him. Let
the poor devil go."

"Humph! I say, Dan."

"What?"

"If I win that bet, I must open the
ball."

"What! At once?"

"Certainly."

"What's your first move?"

"The papers."

"Eh?"

"Send your coon out for the papers,
and—er—let him take a telegram for me,
too, will you?"

"Sure!"

"I want to wire to my assistant."

"He don't go in the heat. No help,
Carter."

"You shall read the telegram."

"Very good. Write it."

Nick rapidly wrote the following mes-
sage, which was soon speeding over the
wires to Chick.

Let the reader see if he can read it as
Chick did:

"Have come here to rest me. Any-
thing immediate you care for. Is Patsy's
important matter adjusted? Answer."

The message was blind unless one be-
gan at the second word, and read only
every other word, to the end.

He would then read:

"Come to me. Immediate. Care is
important. Adjusted."

The message meant to the assistant

SEE OUR NEW COUPON OFFER—LAST PAGE.

that he was to go to his chief at once, that he must take great care to keep the fact a secret, and that the case of the bank hold-up was so adjusted in the detective's mind that he felt confident of speedy success.

In due time Nick received the following reply:

"Patsy still busy. Will follow instructions."

That was all.

Nick left the message where Derrington and his partner could see it, and waited.

He did nothing of importance for three days, beyond studying the papers carefully.

Two or three times he absented himself mysteriously, and one of these occasions he managed to see the man whose wrist he had broken.

"Rogers," he said, "although I broke your wrist, I saved your life."

"How?"

"Why, if you had knifed Derrington, you would have been hanged."

"I'd rather hang than to have failed."

"Bah! Why do you hate him so?"

"Because he robbed me."

"Robbed you! Nonsense! You gambled and lost."

"That's all you know about it."

"Is it? Why?"

"I tell you he robbed me."

"You said that before; but how?"

"I'm not the only victim, either."

"No? Will you tell me about it?"

"What for?"

"I may help you."

"Who are you?"

"A detective."

"Ah! Are you on to their conspiracy?"

"Whose conspiracy?"

"Derrington's, Danver's, Seliney's, Gaul's; I reckon the whole lot is in it."

"A gambler's conspiracy, eh?"

"Just that."

"Tell me about it."

"I can't."

"Why?"

"Because I haven't caught on yet myself."

"What makes you think there is a conspiracy?"

"I know there is."

"How?"

"Because I am a victim of it."

"Bah!"

"Sneer if you want to. I mean what I say."

"You lost your money, and then crawl."

"Not much I don't."

"Explain, then."

"Did you ever hear of the green-goods game?"

"Once. What has that to do with it?"

"A great deal."

"How so? You didn't play with sawdust and green paper, did you?"

"No. Look here, Mr. ——— What's your name?"

"Simmons."

"Well, look here, Simmons, those gamblers are playing nothing more nor less than a green-goods racket."

"Pshaw!"

"I tell you it's true. There are two or three points of difference, but the principle is the same."

"Humph!"

"Instead of tackling a greenhorn, they select the shrewdest man they can find."

"I don't catch on."

"You wouldn't, either, if they tried it on you."

"Perhaps not. I can tell better when I hear it."

"They don't play the game with greenbacks, either. They play it with cards and chips at the faro-table."

"Ah! And still you call it green-goods, eh?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because they rob the men who try to rob them."

"You puzzle me."

"Look here. Take the bona fide green-goods game for example."

"Well?"

"A fellow, to bite at that and be beaten, has got to be half-thief himself, hasn't he?"

"That's about the size of it."

"He's always a fellow who's willing to cheat the Government, anyhow, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's just so in this game they are playing."

"I wish you'd explain."

"If I do, I'll have to confess that I consented to be a scoundrel and got roped in."

"Never mind. Tell me."

"I'll do it."

"Good!"

"Do you know Sam Seliney?"

"No."

"He's one of Derrington's dealers."

"Ah! Well?"

"He came to me a while ago with a proposition, about making a wad of money."

"Yes."

"He knew I was assistant cashier in the — Bank, in Kansas City, and he went way there to look me up."

"I see. Go on."

"His scheme was to break Derrington and Danvers' bank."

"Ah!"

"I was to raise a few thousand dollars, and take a trip to Denver."

"Yes."

"Being introduced in the faro bank, I

was to play a little until I got used to the house, and in the meantime give the impression that I was a heavy drinker."

"I see."

"Finally Seliney was to give me a signal previously agreed upon."

"Ah!"

"Then I was to play heavy."

"Well, but——"

"Wait. For that deal he rung in a pack of cards that he had fixed; see?"

"Not quite."

"Well, the cards were straight enough, but were arranged in a regular order which I had previously learned."

"Ah!"

"I simply had been obliged to learn fifty-two names before appearing in Denver. The list he furnished. By that means I knew every card before it was turned, and could bet with a certainty of winning."

"Humph."

"For example, suppose the box showed a queen on top."

"Well!"

"The order, beginning at queen, was: Queen, four, ace, deuce, nine, jack, six, trey, queen, queen, and so on."

"The order was arbitrary?"

"Entirely so. A consecutive arrangement would have been discovered."

"Likely to, that's so."

"Well, all I had to do was wait for the signal and then to play heavy."

"And you agreed?"

"Certainly. Where is the gambler who will not bet on a sure thing!"

"I never saw one."

"Nor I. I came to Denver with five thousand dollars in my pocket. The money belonged to the bank I work for, not to me."

"Ah!"

"I saw Seliney. He cautioned me to play heavy that time. 'Win a few thou-

sand and quit," he said. "You will get a reputation. Later, come back and plunge."

"I saw the point. I went to the faro-table. Seliney gave the signal, and I played. I won ten thousand dollars."

"And quit?"

"Yes."

"What then?"

"I went back to Kansas City, and returned the five thousand I had borrowed without leave."

"And then——"

"I saw Seliney again."

"Ah!"

"He was ready for another go?"

"I see."

"We made a date."

"To break the bank, eh?"

"Yes."

"And got broke yourself?"

"I stole thirty thousand dollars from my bank, and came here. I went to Derrington's. Seliney gave me the signal. I played and won until I was way ahead. The queen had won three times, when Derrington stepped up behind me.

"He saw my pile of chips, and seemed to discover from that fact that I was a winner. He glanced at the case and then at the book that my left-hand neighbor was keeping.

"'You're in luck, Mr. Rogers,' he said.

"'Yes,' I replied.

"'Will you bet that the king wins out?' he asked.

"'Yes.'

"The king was, according to the arrangement I had made with Seliney, bound to win out. The scheme had never failed yet, and I simply saw an opportunity to make my fortune at one stroke.

"'How much?' he asked.

"'Any amount you please,' said I.

"'Bah!' he cried, and laughingly added: 'Name the amount yourself, but

don't do less than double your winnings, or I won't bet.'

"He turned away, and I, having cast a rapid glance over my pile, named the sum I would bet.

"He took me up. The bet was made and the king lost.

"Mr. Simmons, I walked out of there without a cent, and I owe Dan Derrington ten thousand dollars besides. In a day or two my bank will discover that I am a defaulter, and—— Do you wonder that I wanted to kill him?"

"I should have thought that the man Seliney would have been your victim."

"Bah! Seliney is only a tool. It is Derrington who put up this job. I saw it in a flash, and I saw it all. It is the green-goods game, without the greenbacks and the pretended counterfeit money; the green-goods game with shrewd gamblers, instead of countrymen for victims, and they bite all the more readily because they think they are too shrewd to be fooled."

"If it is akin to the green-goods game, there must be other victims."

"There are!"

"Do you know any of them?"

"No."

"Do you think you could find some?"

"I can try."

"Try, then."

"Why?"

"If you find them, we will expose this plot.

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes."

"But I am under arrest——"

"You will be discharged in the morning."

"Ah! But my bank——"

"Take the first train home. Tell them everything. Assure them that you will recover the money. They will be easy with you."

"I wish I thought so."

"Try it."

"I will."

"Then go to work, and work hard. When you find out anything worth knowing send it to Mark Morford, Windsor Hotel."

"I'll do it."

"Good!"

"Do you think me a scoundrel, Mr. Simmons?"

"You came pretty near being one, but you escaped. I'll cultivate your friend Seliney. Be wary, and you'll be all right."

"Mark Morford will hear from me. Who is he?"

"A friend of mine, who'll break the bank in earnest, Rogers."

CHAPTER VII.

MARK MORFORD ARRIVES.

The same night, following the interview between Nick Carter and Richard Rogers, the detective was in the gambling-house of Derrington and Danvers, when the latter said suddenly:

"Well, Carter, what do you think of Rogers?"

"Eh?" replied the detective; "oh, nothing much!"

"Did he tell you his story?"

"Yes."

"And—pardon me—do you believe it?"

"In part, yes."

"What part?"

"The part which tells of the robbing of the Kansas City bank for the purpose of gambling."

"Ah!"

"You have heard the story, Danvers?"

"Certainly."

"What do you think of it?"

Danvers shrugged his shoulders.

"The fellow came here with a 'sys-

tem,' which he believed was sure to win. He tried it and won a little money. Then he went away, but only to return later convinced that he could break the bank. It's the old story that we hear so much in this life we lead."

"Sure."

"We investigated his charges against our dealer, however."

"You mean Seliney?"

"Yes."

"What is his story?"

"Simply that Rogers offered him ten thousand dollars if he would ring in a fixed pack of cards, as he now charges was done."

"Ah! And Seliney?"

"Refused, of course."

"Did he tell you of it at the time?"

"Certainly."

"I wonder that you permitted Rogers to play here after that."

"Why? The game is square, as you know."

"Yes; but——"

"He could not beat it except on the square; we could not win his money except on the square. If he wanted to play, all right. The only difference the story made was that we watched him a little more closely than we otherwise would."

"I see."

"How are you getting along in the Moffat case?"

Nick winked knowingly, and said:

"The conditions do not compel me to make reports."

"Certainly not."

"Then don't ask for them, Danvers; when I get ready to talk, you'll hear from me."

"Correct."

"Where is that dealer of yours—the one you call Seliney?"

"Eh? He's away."

"Coming back?"

"Oh, yes!"

"When?"

"To-night."

"Ah!"

"He should be here about midnight. Why?"

"I'm curious to see him. There may be something in that story. He may be playing you."

Danvers laughed.

"Not much!" he said.

"You seem very positive."

"I am. Sam has worked for us a long time. We never had a better dealer, nor a straighter one. The fellow wouldn't beat us out of a cent, if he had a chance; and he never gets a chance, you may be sure."

Nick looked at his watch.

"It's ten o'clock," he said. "I think I'll stroll down to the hotel for a moment. I feel like playing to-night, and I want some money."

"No need of going to the hotel."

"Why?"

"I'll lend you all you want."

"Thanks, awfully; but I never gamble with another man's money."

"Ah!"

"Things are rather slow here, just now," continued Nick, "and will be for an hour; won't you go with me?"

"Yes, I will."

"Good! Come on!"

Nick had seen that Danvers and Derrington were uneasy when he was out of their sight, and the knowledge strengthened the suspicions that he entertained.

The game that they had played with him would have disarmed a man less shrewd, but it only strengthened his theory.

Here is the way in which he reasoned the matter out:

First.—When he first met the gamblers, they had been disagreeably sur-

prised to know that he was in Denver. Why? There could be only one answer to that—Because his presence was a menace to them.

Second.—They had pumped him to find out why he was there. Why? Because they had some reason to fear that he was watching them.

Third.—Derrington had purposely brought the conversation around to the subject of the Moffat hold-up. Why? Because in some manner they were interested in knowing if Nick Carter was in Denver at the instigation of the bank officials, to look up that very affair.

There could be only one reason for them to entertain such a fear, and that was obvious.

Fourth.—The trio had met Moffat, and the wager was made with the very evident intention of finding out if the gambler's suspicions were correct. The conduct of the bank president had been such as to throw them off their guard, and they were now evidently sorry that the wager which compelled Nick Carter to remain in Denver and work upon the Moffat case, had been made.

When Nick asked Danvers to accompany him to the hotel, he did so because he saw that the gamblers were suspicious of him the moment that he was out of their sight.

The surest way, therefore, to avoid surveillance which might lead to perplexing discoveries was to ask Danvers to accompany him.

The fact was, that Nick expected to find Chick at the hotel.

He had arranged a plan by which he was certain that he could outwit even such shrewd men as the two gamblers, and to have Danvers with him when he worked the scheme, was to render its success even more certain.

DIAMOND DICK, JR., IS OFTEN IN DANGER.

They left the gambling-rooms together, and walked over to the Windsor.

There, Nick led the way at once to his room, stopping long enough at the office to glance over the register.

He saw the name, Mark Morford, on the book, and he knew that everything was ready to spring the game.

Having reached his rooms, he provided Danvers with refreshments and then excused himself for a moment.

"Where are you going?" asked Danvers.

Nick made a satisfactory reply, and hurried from the room.

He hastened along the corridor, and was soon inside the room which he knew had been taken by the man who had registered as Mark Morford.

Before him, ensconced in an easy-chair, was his own counterpart.

A man sat there smoking a cigar who was so exactly like himself in every detail, that the closest observer would have been puzzled to know which was which the moment they were together.

"Well, Chick," said Nick, dropping into a chair. "I see you received the letter which I sent to Kansas City for you."

"Yes."

"You have got the make-up in capital shape, too."

"You've got to play the part I've been playing with these fellows."

"I guess I can do it."

"You'll have to. I'm going to do the Morford act myself."

"All right."

"Danvers is here with me."

"Where?"

"In my room."

"Ah!"

"You've got to go there and return with him to the gambling-rooms as Nick Carter."

"That's easy."

"Did my letter post you sufficiently upon the details of the case?"

"Yes; except as to what has occurred since you wrote it."

"Nothing has occurred since that is worth mentioning."

"Then I'm all right."

"You are."

"What was this particular errand for?"

"To get some money to gamble with. Have you got some?"

"Plenty."

"Then skip to my room. Play your part well, and we will win."

"Good! Do you think that Derrington and Danvers were concerned in the 'hold-up'?"

"In some way, yes."

"Not, directly, then?"

"I don't think either of them did it."

"Ah!"

"But I believe they know who did."

"Good!"

"I more than half-believe that I can name the man, but I haven't a particle of evidence."

"I see."

"That's what we've got to get."

"Exactly."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TEN-THOUSAND-DOLLAR BILL.

"Get a move on you now, Chick, for we must do considerable in the next few days."

"Right."

Chick left the room, after adding one or two touches to the disguise he wore, and was soon with Danvers.

It seems remarkable that Nick and Chick could change identities so readily, but it must be remembered that they knew each other's every act.

They were the same build and com-

plexion, and wore the same size clothing throughout.

When without any disguise, they did not at all resemble each other, but a few touches could render them so exactly alike that the closest observer would be deceived.

Accustomed as they were to working together, it was an easy matter for one to play the part of the other, and so perfectly that discovery was not to be thought of.

"Well," said Danvers, when Chick entered the room where he was waiting; "have you got your boodle?"

"Yes; I'm ready."

"Let's mosey along back, then."

"Good!"

They left the hotel together a moment later, the gambler never suspecting that the man who accompanied him was not the same as the one who had gone there with him but a short time before.

Thirty minutes later they were in the gambling-rooms.

Chick, who was thoroughly up on all gambling games, went at once to the faro-tables and purchased a stock of chips.

But he played warily, and after losing a hundred dollars, quit, with the remark that it was not his night.

Midnight came, and the negro who attended the door, handed a card to Derrington.

"Mark Morford," he read from it.

Then he motioned to Chick.

"I say, Carter," he said, "the fellow you were speaking of has come."

"Who? Morford?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"In the ante-room. I'm going to send for him."

"Do. He's a plunger."

"I want to ask you some questions first."

"Fire away, Dan."

"You have a reputation of always sticking to the truth, Carter."

"I believe so; yes. Well?"

"Will you swear that this fellow, Morford, is not one of your assistants?"

"I will."

"Will you swear that you did not send for him to come here?"

"I will."

"The conditions of our wager give me the right to ask these questions."

"Certainly."

"I have heard that Nick Carter has an assistant named Chick."

"That is true."

"Will you swear that Mark Morford is not Chick?"

"I will swear that he is not Chick, certainly."

"Where is Chick, now?"

"When he telegraphed me, he was in New York."

"Has he left there since then?"

"How should I know that? He is doubtless very busy, and he may be anywhere at this moment."

"Will you swear that he is not in Denver?"

"No; why should I? Are you going to flunk, Dan? Chick would not come to Denver unless Nick Carter ordered it. I have given no such order, and Mark Morford, the only man whom you seem to suspect, is not—positively is not—Chick."

"Good!"

"Does that satisfy you?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps you would like me to swear that I am Nick Carter and not President Harrison, or Superintendent Byrnes."

"No," laughed Derrington. "I am satisfied so far as that is concerned."

"I'm glad of that."

"I'll have Morford brought in, now."

DID YOU EVER HEAR OF DIAMOND DICK, JR.?

"Do."

"You have met him?"

"Yes."

"You know him well?"

"Very well?"

"Post me about him."

"Post yourself, Dan. He's a plunger, and he'll go broke or break you in all probability."

"You think so?"

"Yes."

"We'll see."

"We will."

Derrington gave the order, and in a moment more the long expected Mark Morford entered the room.

"Are you Mr. Derrington?" he asked, shaking hands with Dan.

"Yes."

"Doesn't it strike you that you're infernally ceremonious; eh?"

"How so?"

"Why, confound it, you've kept me waiting at least ten minutes to get into your place, dontcher know."

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Morford. Fact is——"

"Oh, never mind; I'm here now."

"Do you know this gentleman, Mr. Morford?" and Derrington indicated Chick, whom he supposed to be Nick Carter.

Morford fixed a glass in one eye and stared at Chick.

"Cawn't say I do," he drawled. "A friend of yours, Derrington?"

"Have you ever heard of Nick Carter?" continued the gambler.

"Nick Carter! Well, yes. I know him very well. But——"

"This gentleman is Nick Carter."

"Morford laughed."

"That'll do to tell the marines," he said. "Why, I know Nick Car——"

"Pardon me Morford," interrupted Chick, laughing also, "when you met me, I wore a disguise. I haven't any on now, and hence——"

"Why, blow me! I believe you are Carter," exclaimed the supposed Morford.

"I am."

"I recognize the voice, but——"

"Not the face, eh?"

"No."

"Do you remember the twenty-one thousand dollar bet you won at Daly's?"

"Do I? Well, I should smile. I say, Derrington."

"Well?"

"I'm going to win."

"What makes you think so?"

"Carter always gives me luck."

"Good! If you don't win too much, I shan't kick."

"I'll either win or lose a great deal."

"When will you begin?"

"Now; if——"

"If what?"

"Do you know where you can get me a ten-thousand-dollar bill?"

"What do you want of that?"

"For a mascot."

"A mascot?"

"Yes; you believe in such things, don't you? Mascots and Jonahs?"

"Sure. Are you going to make a ten-thousand-dollar bet?"

"Perhaps."

"Have you got the boodle?"

For reply Morford drew forth a pocket-book from which he took a huge stack of bills.

"I've got about thirty thou. with me," he said. "Can you match it."

"You bet I can."

"Good! I'll take away sixty, or leave this wad."

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes, if you'll get me a mascot."

"A ten-thousand-dollar bill."

"Exactly that."

"I don't think I have one."

"Pshaw! Wait."

Morford started in the direction of the table, but paused in the centre of the room.

"Has anybody here got a ten-thousand-dollar bill for which he will accept smaller currency" he asked, in a loud voice.

Everybody looked up, but nobody replied.

"I want it for a mascot," continued the stranger. "I'll give a hundred dollars bonus."

Danvers, who was sitting near the dealer watching the play, replied, coolly:

"I can accommodate you."

"Thanks. The hundred goes."

DIAMOND DICK, JR. IS A FINE FELLOW.

"Of course."

Nick, behind his disguise as Morford, saw Seliney, who was dealing, shift uneasily in his chair, and he caught a quick glance of warning from Derrington to Danvers.

Danvers, however, failed to see it.

A moment later he went to the safe, and presently the required bill was flung upon the table before the late arrival.

"Thanks," he said again.

Then he coolly drew out ten thousand and one hundred dollars, and passed them to Danvers.

After that he scrutinized the bill very narrowly.

"Isn't it good?" asked the dealer. "If not, you needn't keep it."

Nick thought that the bill was thrust out of sight into the drawer with more than usual haste, but he seemed to notice nothing as he continued:

"Oh, it's all right, I dare say," was the reply, and he threw it back upon the table carelessly.

Before doing that, however, he had made an important discovery.

He knew that his theory was correct, for one glance told him that he held in his hand the very bill which had been given to C. J. Wells by the teller of the First National Bank at the time of the robbery.

"Don't you want it?" asked Seliney.

"No. I want its weight in chips."

"Oh!"

"Twenty five-hundred-dollar chips."

They were handed out, and he began to play.

Nick Carter was not only an expert, but he was lucky.

He made bets of five hundred dollars at a time, sometimes increasing them to a thousand.

He lost and won, won and lost, and, at the end of an hour, he was just five hundred winner.

"I'm through," he said. "I'd rather lose than stay even all the time. Cash them, please."

"Certainly."

Seliney pulled out a mass of small bills, and was about to count out the

money, when Nick stopped him with a gesture.

CHAPTER IX.

HOT UPON THE TRAIL.

"The big bill, please," he said.

"I want to keep that here," replied Seliney.

"Oh, you do, eh? Very good. I supposed that this was a house that always obliged its customers. I don't want it!"

"You're not offended, I hope?"

"Offended, no. I'm only disgusted."

"Ah!"

"I had heard so much about Western gambling-houses that I got the idea that they were first-class."

"What's the matter?" asked Derrington, coming up at that moment.

"Nothing," replied Nick, pocketing his cash and turning away. "Is there another gambling-house in town?"

"Yes, several. Why?"

"Nothing. I shall probably not see you again."

"Why? What's the trouble?"

"Your dealer is scared because I won five hundred dollars, that's all."

"That's a——" began Seliney.

But the newcomer wheeled and cast a quick glance upon him, so that he stopped suddenly.

"That's a what?" he asked, coolly.

"A mistake."

"Oh!"

"You are wrong."

"Am I? I bought a mascot. I paid a bonus for it. I ask to have it returned in exchange for my chips, and you refuse. Either you are afraid of me, or——"

"Or what?"

"Or you're discourteous."

But Danvers had gone to the drawer, and taken out the coveted bill.

He came around the table to where Morford was standing.

"Will you allow me to change this with you for smaller bills?" he said, with the utmost politeness.

"Certainly."

The exchange was made, but as soon as the bill was once more in Nick's possession he held it aloft, and said, in a loud tone:

SEE OUR NEW COUPON OFFER—LAST PAGE.

"Gentlemen, this bill is bound to be my mascot now."

They all laughed.

Then, with a quick motion, the detective folded the bill twice, and at the same instant drew forth a pair of pocket scissors.

"Look!" he exclaimed.

Deftly and quickly he began cutting the bill with the scissors.

In an instant it was done, and he spread it open again.

He had cut a perfect star from the centre of the greenback.

Opening his watch case, he placed the star in it, and then, holding up the bill again, said:

"I have marked it. I shall always keep that bill. If I ever go broke, I can get it redeemed. Now, Derrington, look out, for I shall break your bank."

They laughed.

Nick, by a clever ruse, had succeeded in marking the bill so that it would be recognized again by every one who was present in that room, and yet there was not a man there except Chick who did not believe that the supposed gambler was sincere in his reason for the strange mutilation.

Nick knew the bill.

It was the same one that had been described to him by Mr. Moffat at the bank at their first interview.

Nick was thoroughly satisfied that the robber of the First National Bank was known to Derrington and Danvers.

The thing was now to prove it.

He soon afterward left the place, having managed to signal Chick that he wanted to confer with him before evening.

He went to his room at the hotel, it then being after two o'clock in the morning.

He waited until three, and Chick did not come.

Then the detective went to Chick's room, but the young assistant was not there.

He waited another half-hour, and then, with a misgiving that something had happened, he went out upon the street, sauntered along until he found a dark

alley-way, and there, in a trice, he transformed himself into a negro.

A moment later, and he was shuffling along toward the gambling-house, where he had procured the bill of large denomination.

He had nearly reached the stairway which led up to the rooms, when he saw Sam Seliney emerge from it, and after a hasty glance around walk rapidly away.

"Ah!" thought Nick. "I'll keep you in sight, my man."

He had not far to go.

The dealer, keeping in shadow, hurried to Sixteenth street, and thence to Larimer. A moment later he darted into a stairway, and disappeared.

"Humph!" thought Nick. "That is Gaul and Herrick's place, guess I'll go in, too."

He waited a moment, and then crept cautiously forward.

Entering by the hallway, he mounted the stairs, but was soon stopped by a door, half-way in the ascent, which was provided with the customary wicket which gambling-houses use for their protection.

"I can't pick that lock and get in without their hearing me," mused the detective. "I must know what is going on, too. Ah!"

The exclamation was caused by hearing somebody approach the door from the other side.

Nick stepped back into a deeper shadow, and waited.

The door opened and a negro came out.

"I'm in luck," thought Nick.

The negro closed the door behind him, and started to descend.

But he had not taken a half-dozen steps when his throat was seized in a grip of steel and he was borne downward, silently but surely.

"If you make a sound, you're a dead coon!" whispered the detective in his ear.

Then, in an instant he clapped handcuffs upon the terrified darky, and the next he raised him and carried him out of the hallway into the street, and into an adjoining doorway.

"Who is in there?" he demanded of the negro.

"Mr. Derrington, Mr. Danvers, Mr. Herrick, Mr. Gaul, Mr. —"

"Never mind. I know the rest. Who are you?"

"Pete."

"Where were you going?"

"To see if everything was all right."

"All right for what?"

"Well, they don't want to be 'sturbed."

"I thought not. Give me your coat."

"Yo' goin' ter rob dis——"

Nick was too impatient to wait longer.

He pulled a vial of chloroform from his pocket, poured the contents upon his handkerchief, and thrust it against the negro's mouth and nostrils.

He struggled for a moment, but the drug did its work, and Pete was soon limp and unconscious.

Then Nick worked quickly.

He took the negro's coat and hat, and then hastily making a few changes in his own face, left Pete where he was, and returned to the entrance to the gambling-rooms.

With the keys taken from Pete's pocket, he easily opened the wicket door and entered.

As he suspected, he found himself in a room which communicated with the gambling-house proper, and beyond the next door he could hear voices.

He had scarcely closed the door behind him when the opposite one opened, and Danvers appeared.

"That you, Pete?" he demanded.

"Yes, sah," replied Nick.

"Everything all right?"

"Yes, sah."

"Good! Clear out yourself now."

"Yes, sah."

private game is going on."

Nick turned and opened the door as if to go out, as Danvers passed through the opposite one out of sight.

Nick opened and closed his door noisily, but he remained on the inside.

He was hot upon the trail.

CHAPTER X.

GETTING THINGS DOWN FINE.

In an instant Nick crept forward, and placed one ear against the threshold of the other door.

He was immediately gratified by what he heard, and he knew that the next few moments would bring many developments.

"Now to business," he heard Danvers say. "We are confronted by a grave condition of things."

"Bah!" said Gaul.

"I mean it," continued Danvers. "Something has gotten out. What, I don't know, but Nick Carter is not here for nothing."

Derrington laughed.

"He can't hurt us much now," he said.

"No; but Morford can."

"Morford?"

"Yes."

"You think——"

"I don't think; I know!"

"What do you know?"

"I know that Morford isn't Morford at all."

"Who is he?"

"He's a detective."

"What? Nick Carter's assistant?"

"No. Nick Carter wouldn't lie about it."

"Who, then?"

"I don't know who. He's a detective. He must be. Of one thing I'm certain."

"Of what?"

"He isn't what he pretends to be."

"How do you know it?"

"I have telegraphed to Daly, and to others. Nobody knows Morford. He's a detective, and——"

"And what?"

"And he's on to that ten-thousand-dollar bill."

"By Jove!"

"Do you see it now?"

"Yes."

"Carter was working up our little syndicate racket. His interview with Rogers proved that, and to-night——"

"Well?"

"I had Rogers fixed."

There was terrible significance on that word "fixed," but somebody said coolly:

"How?"

"He's laid away temporarily. He was on his way to see Mark Morford."

"How do you know?"

"He told me."

READ THE GREAT PREMIUM OFFER ON LAST PAGE.

"Ah!"

"He gave the whole snap away. He has been doing a little detective work on his own hook, at the suggestion of Carter."

"Has, eh?"

"Yes, and he's got Johnson, Cross, Moriarty and Samuels down fine. He knows that we played the same game on them that we played on him, and that we made about three hundred thousand on the racket."

"Ah!"

"He was going to Morford with all that information."

"Why to Morford?"

"Because Carter told him to do it. Do you begin to see?"

There was a moment's silence, and then Seliney spoke.

"What shall we do with Carter?" he said.

"Bury him?" replied Gaul, laconically.

"Dangerous, that," commented Derrington.

"It's the only thing to be done."

"Perhaps he'll make terms."

"Bah!" replied Seliney; "if anybody is arrested for the First National Bank 'hold-up,' it won't be me."

"No? who will it be?"

Seliney laughed.

"One of our victims," he said, coolly.

"I'm dull, I know," murmured Derrington, "but I don't quite understand."

"I'll tell you in a moment," was the reply. "First, I want to ask a question or two."

"Ask them."

"How much profit have we realized since we formed our little syndicate?"

"About three hundred thousand dollars."

"We have made the entire pile out of sixteen victims," continued Seliney, coldly. "Ten of them have shot themselves, one is in an insane asylum, and two are in prison. Three are at large, Rogers, Johnson and Cross, and each of them is a fugitive from justice. Is that all true?"

"Yes."

"I have worked every scheme but one

myself. You fellows have done nothing. Is that right?"

"Nearly."

"Very good. You have had your share of the profits; the men themselves are my meat."

"Ah!"

"I have masqueraded under the name of Cross, and also as Johnson. I have laid plans, so that if anybody is arrested for the bank hold-up, it will be Cross, or Johnson, or both, not I."

A faint murmur of admiration went around the group.

"My right name is known to only one man here, and he is Danvers. He knows what I mean when I tell you this tale. Somebody is bound to be arrested soon, and that somebody will be one or both of the men I have named. Bah! you might as well know the truth. My right name is Cross, but I'm no relation to our victim of that name. There are two Crosses, do you see, and some one will work the scheme home to one of them, but it will not be me."

"Won't it?" thought Nick; "we will see about that."

"Now, one more point," continued Seliney. "This fellow, Nick Carter, is my prey, not yours. He is the only man I fear. I don't give a rap for Morford. I'm going to take care of Carter myself, and I don't want any interference."

"What will you do with him?" asked Derrington.

"I'll do as you suggested. I'll make him promise to drop it, or I'll—— Never mind, that is my business."

Nick remained in his place of concealment until nearly daylight, taking in every word that was said, hoping to hear what they had done with Chick.

But he gained no further information than that already given, and at last he was obliged to leave to avoid discovery.

He went at once to the hotel, and to the room that Chick occupied. He was astonished to find his young assistant there in bed and sound asleep.

"Wake up, Chick!" he said. "I thought you were in——"

"A grave, eh?"

"Yes, or near it."

"Not much! I'm still kicking. That enial fellow, Seliney, led me into a trap, and locked the door on me. You taught me how to pick locks once, and after he had gone I walked out."

"Did, eh? Well, walk back."

"Why?"

"He's our man. If he finds that you have escaped, he'll skip; see?"

"Yes."

"Get back, then."

"I'm off."

The following morning at eleven o'clock Mark Morford appeared at the door of Derrington and Danvers' gambling house.

"I'm looking for Carter," he said, when Derrington received him.

"Did you expect to find him here?"

"I thought you might know where he is."

At that instant the bell rang, and Morford, with a smile, said:

"I asked a friend to meet me here. Was that all right?"

"Certainly."

Nick had noticed that both Seliney and Danvers were in the adjoining room and he knew that they could not get out without passing through the apartment where he was talking with Derrington.

A moment later the door opened, and David H. Moffat walked into the room.

Derrington looked astonished.

Nick only smiled. Turning to the gambler, he said:

"Call Seliney here, will you?"

"What for?"

"Because I wish to prove to you that I have won my bet."

"Who are you?"

"I am Nick Carter," and he tore aside the disguise which rendered him Mark Morford.

For an instant Derrington looked as if he would fight.

Then with a cold smile, he said:

"Am I included in this arrest?"

"No," replied Nick. "We will have to take your partner, though. In plain English, we want Seliney, alias Cross, alias Johnson, alias Barney Fitch, a notorious green-goods dealer, and we want Danvers,

alias Johnson, alias Cowing, alias Mike Hovey, an old-time burglar."

"By heavens! If I had known all that ——" began Derrington.

"Never mind, Dan. You know it now. I have a little piece of advice to give you. Quit those fellows Gaul, Herrick and Conners, for you're on dangerous ground. I'm onto every move you've made. Call Seliney and Danvers here."

"I will."

"There are two fellows named Cross and Johnson, who are under suspicion now. We will still have a Cross and Johnson, but innocent men shall not suffer. Call them, and when you have done so, go and release the man whom you thought was Nick Carter."

"Bray! Sam!" called Derrington.

A moment later they entered the room, but no sooner had they crossed the threshold than Nick stepped forward, and with a leveled revolver in each hand, said, coldly:

"I'll kill the first one of you who moves without orders! Hands up! Quick!"

They obeyed.

"Mr. Moffat," continued the detective, "you will find some bracelets in my coat-pockets. Will you oblige me by presenting them to these gentlemen?"

"Will I? Won't I?"

"Thanks. Now, my two worthies, your goose is cooked. I have charge of three old indictments against you, Seliney, besides the robbery of Mr. Moffat, and I've got four for you, Mr. Mike Hovey—excuse me, Danvers!"

Derrington had slipped quietly away, and in a moment more Chick walked into the room.

He took charge of one of the men, and Nick of the other, and they were marched away.

That evening, at the hotel, a sealed envelope was handed to Nick Carter. He broke it open, and found the amount of the bet he had made with Dan Derrington, with the following note:

"Carter: Here's the boodle. You won it fairly. I'm going away for my health. I tipped the wink to Gaul, Herrick and

MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF DIAMOND DICK, JR.

Conners. If you call, they won't be in. I ought to hate you, but I don't.

"D. D."

Nick sent the money to a charitable society. He found that Derrington had gone to Mr. Moffat, and requested that the letter be given to the detective with the wager.

Thus ended the case which had puzzled everybody for four years, Nick Carter solving the riddle in an incredibly short time.

How?

Why, by using his brain; by reasoning the robber's process out, step by step; by asking himself a few questions, such as:

Why exactly twenty-one thousand dol-

lars? Why the utter disregard of consequences? Why take such desperate means to keep a pledge? Why (when the banker was at his mercy) not have asked for fifty thousand dollars, instead of twenty-one thousand?

Why had the robber pledged his life to the exact amount?

What manner of man would by his life, have matured a second nature which could answer these questions?

A gambler!

[THE END.]

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